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## SERMON CCCLX.\*

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### THE LESSONS OF CALAMITY.

"Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."—Luke xiii. 4, 5.

It was one of the characteristic excellences which marked the teachings of our Saviour, that he preached, in the highest and best sense of that phrase, to the times, and his ministry was thus *a word in season*. He addressed himself to men's present duties, and their present sins and snares; and the passing events of the day, or the scenery of the spot where he taught, furnished him with ready and apposite illustrations. The news of a cruel butchery, or a melancholy calamity; the tidings that told of the Galileans slaughtered over their sacrifices; or of the unhappy victims in Siloam, crushed by a falling tower—the news that for the time was the burden of all tongues, and made all ears to tingle, was seized by him as affording the occasion of riveting some keen truth upon the memory and conscience of the multitude. And thus it might be, and ought to be, with us. The journals of the day, too often taken up but in the gratification of an idle curiosity, that seeks ever to learn and tell some new thing, might preach to us of Providence and Eternity. We might consult them to see, in the changes they record, how God is governing his own world, with a care that never slumbers, and a wisdom that never falters. For all that occurs, from the fall of a dying sparrow to the crash of an empire overthrown, is but as He bids or permits it, who "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."<sup>†</sup>

An event such as that upon which our Redeemer commented, has occurred amongst ourselves. In the metropolis of our nation, the seat of our government, where so much of the intellect of the nation is congregated, and whence so wide an influence goes forth to the ends of our land, death has made recently its fell inroads. The shadows of the

\* A Discourse, on occasion of the explosion in the U. S. ship of war, PRINCETON, near Washington, on the 28th Feb., 1844, by which the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of the Navy, with others, lost their lives. Delivered before the Amity street Baptist Church, Sabbath morning, 3d March, and before the Oliver street Baptist Church, Sabbath evening, 10th March, 1844.

† Daniel iv. 35.

sepulchre have fallen, as in sudden and disastrous eclipse, upon the high places of our republic. A new vessel of war, built with lavish expenditure, in which science had shown her terrible skill in inventing new engines of death of fearful potency, had become to that city the theme of general curiosity and admiration. Hundreds of guests thronged her decks. Some of them were the young, the gay, and the fashionable; others were the aged, the experienced and the influential, citizens distinguished by the station they occupied, or the talents they had displayed. Little did that stately vessel, beneath a brilliant sky, in her holiday trim, and with her exulting company, seem the fitting scene for auguries of disaster, or the intrusion of distress. Below, all was merriment and gaiety, whilst the laugh, the jest, and the song, were intermingled with their feasting. The spot consecrated in the hearts of this nation, as that of the abode and last resting-place of the Father of his country, was near. The memory of the mighty dead was not forgotten by the inmates of that vessel as she floated along. But alas! death was much nearer to that rejoicing throng, than in the tomb where reposed the mortal remains of Washington. "Couched in grim repose," the destroyer had already marked fresh and nearer prey. Above, on the deck of that majestic ship, preparations are made to discharge anew the piece of ordnance already so famed for its destructive power, but soon to obtain yet more disastrous fame. Men eminent in station, acting some of them in the cabinet of our Chief Magistrate, as his chosen advisers, and one of their number but a few days installed in his high trust, had gathered around. The discharge took place. Amid the smoke and din, shrieks were heard. When that smoke had passed away, the newly invented engine of destruction was seen itself a ruin, after having made that deck a scene of desolation and carnage. Two of the ministers of our government, the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of the Navy, with others of the distinguished visitors, lay on that blood-bespattered deck, disfigured and mutilated, either breathless or gasping their last. How startling and hideous the contrast between the scenes which but the narrow breadth of that deck then separated; the mangled, the dying and the dead, who were above it, and their nearest relatives, their daughters and their wives, who, cheerful and unconscious, were gathered in joyous groups below it, as yet utterly ignorant of the appalling reality. Those thus suddenly deprived of friends had discerned, in the shock of the discharge, no unwonted and foreboding sounds, nor did they dream of the irreparable bereavement that one brief moment had brought upon its wings of doom. Who shall paint the anguish of an attached wife, that had gone forth in the morning radiant in happiness and hope, but who was now to return at evening to a desolate home and an orphan charge, a new-made widow, meeting her fatherless babes with the cry of Naomi in her heart: "Call me Mara, for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me, for I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty;"—of daughters held back by friendly violence, from the sight of a father's mangled remains—of children left in an instant fatherless,

and of friends who had gone forth to begin together a day of rejoicing, but its evening closed on the survivor mournfully bringing back his dead. The station of several of the victims, the presence of their dearest kindred, and the festive occasion that had assembled them, all heightened the horror of the scene. In the tumultuous and irrepressible distress of the hour, the mercy might perhaps be forgotten that was yet intermingled with the calamity—the guardian care that had given to the multitude endangered, so narrow an escape. For the time, dismay, amazement and horror, filled all hearts. Yet, as it is now easy to see, mercy had watched even over that scene of carnage, and lightened the weight of the infliction, or how easily might a far more sweeping desolation have occurred; and of the hundreds there embarked, but a few frenzied survivors only might have escaped the general wreck, each ready in his distraction to deem himself alone in his deliverance, and each eager to say in the language of those messengers who came with heavy tidings to the patriarch: “I only am escaped alone to tell thee.”

“Hear ye the rod,” cried the prophet, “and who hath appointed it.” Such is the command of our God, by his servant Micah, to the community thus suddenly and sorely visited. Does calamity befall us, it is not voiceless. It was no blind chance that launched the bolt. Trouble springs not out of the dust, nor is it dumb. The Scriptures give speech and articulate utterance as it were, to each such bereavement; and, as the tomb opens to receive its new tenants, a still small voice is heard issuing from its dim chambers, a voice of remonstrance and warning, of tender expostulation and compassionate entreaty. And as our text shows us, we have not only the warrant of our Saviour’s example, for making such seasons the occasion of religious instruction; but we have here, in the records of the evangelist, the exact lessons which such scenes of sudden and public calamity were intended to illustrate and to enforce. May His Spirit enable us rightly to read, and honestly to apply, them.

Some of the judgments of the Divine Providence need no interpreter. Sorrow and guilt are, in the natural workings of man’s conscience, and in the general estimate of mankind, closely conjoined. And there are times, as when a Nadab perishes before the altar he has desecrated, or an Uzzah is blasted beside the ark—as when the storm of fire comes down upon the cities of the plain, or the ark of Noah rides on the whelming waters past the hapless and despairing sinners who had derided his warnings—when God’s judgments follow so closely man’s transgressions, that he who runs may read the purport of the visitation, and see in the peculiar guilt of the sufferers, the reason of their peculiar fate. But it is not always so. Men are, in our days, as in the times of the Saviour they were, prone, on hearing of some strange and sudden calamity, to indulge themselves in rash and uncharitable judgments. They think of the sufferers as more careless or more criminal than others, and suppose them to have become thus the victims of an avenging Providence. Judging of character as the mass of mankind do, merely from the success which attends it, attributing excellence when

they see prosperity, and imputing guilt or weakness where they discover the presence of adversity, they adopt the rule on which Job's friends so tenaciously and cruelly insisted, that calamity is proof of crime; a rule that, in the use of it by those misguided patriarchs, God so signally disavowed and rebuked. It was on this same false principle that the Saviour himself was judged by his own countrymen and cotemporaries, "We," said the prophet, speaking by anticipation in the name of his people—"we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." And was he not heavily afflicted, stricken most sorely, and was it not God that smote and bruised him? It was indeed so; but not, as they supposed, for the peculiar sins of the sufferer himself. "The Man of Sorrows," on whom all griefs centered, was yet "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." In our text, the Redeemer, as he speaks of the slaughtered Galileans, and of the falling tower, rebukes this spirit of rash judgment. He does not deny, indeed, that sin was found in Pilate's victims, and in those who died at Siloam: but he asks; "Were they *sinners more than others*? Were they more deserving this fate than *yourselves*? Except ye repent, ye shall *all likewise perish*." The connection which the mind of man traces, instinctively as it were, between sin and suffering, is not to be made to concentrate upon the individual, but rather to rebound back on the conscience of the race; not to rest on the head of the stranger who perishes, but rather on the heart of the survivor who witnesses it, and who, were God but strict in the immediate exaction of punishment, deserves to share the ruin which he has but beheld.

We cannot, then, misinterpret Providence, when we have thus the comments of the Lord himself, who wields the sceptre of the universe. It is the Legislator of the world, sitting to interpret his own statutes, and to expound the reasons of his own procedure. He teaches us, that the fate of one is the desert of all; that as sinners we all merit a sudden and violent end, and that except we repent, we ultimately and universally perish. These are humbling truths, it must be confessed, but they are salutary. Let us ponder them, in the order in which our Saviour's language presents them.

I. All of us are sinners.

Christ's hearers were such as well as the Galileans, the survivors as well as the sufferers, and we as well as those whose death we deplore.

II. All of us are liable to sudden death.

III. Death to the impenitent sinner is destruction.

IV. Repentance is our only safeguard from eventual ruin.

I. We are all sinners. "*Think ye they were sinners above all men? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*"

The fact of man's sinfulness is one scarce needing to be argued. The conscience of the world and the history of the world, are here in accord with the Scriptures of the world's Maker and Judge. Our own observation and the experience of those around us, who have been most and longest conversant with Human Nature, and our complaints against our fellow men, attest the melancholy truth which Scripture ut-

ters in no dubious terms. When God looked down from heaven to behold the children of men, he saw "none good, no not one." We are each, by nature, the children of wrath, even as others. We may dispute the statement as to ourselves, and a few select favorites, but we are generally prone not only to admit but to assert it of the mass of society. Our complaints of governments and whole classes of society and entire nations, show that we do not deem the multitude of mankind faultless. What page of the world's history is not blotted with tears and stained with blood—tears which man's misconduct has wrung from the eyes of suffering weakness—blood which man's violence has shed? But we need not go to men's vices to prove their sinfulness; it is proved too sufficiently by their very virtues. For what virtue save that exhibited in the one character of Christ, is perfect, symmetrical, stainless? The confessions of men, like Daniel, the man greatly beloved of heaven, under the old dispensation, and the defects of John, the beloved disciple of Christ under the new dispensation, are decisive as to the defective and imperfect character of man on the earth. And if not sinners, what need, again, had the race of a Redeemer? By the heights of glory from which the Ransomer needed to plunge when he rescued us, I may gauge the depths of debasement and guilt into which the ransomed had sunk; and the moral demerit of the first Adam may be inferred from the tremendous sacrifice, and the infinite dignity demanded in the second Adam, who came to deliver and to save him. Let us remember our sinfulness that we may know our true position before the Holy Ruler of the universe. We are not the innocent beings which He at first made us. We were formed upright, but we have "sought out many inventions," and perverse and rebellious inventions they have been. The guilt is our own, an invention of mankind. Hence it is, and not by any original perversion in our creation, that sorrow and anguish have entered our world, and become the heritage of our race. Bereavement and death are strangers, who have intruded into God's happy universe, and for whose admission into our own world, our own hands have torn a pathway. The very presence of death is evidence of sin. "Death" entered "by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all men have sinned."\* And when we view its ravages in those we love, or but read its record in the obituary or upon the gravestone, we are admonished afresh of that truth uttered beside the cross of the world's Redeemer. The lips of the dying thief then, at least, spoke truly, and what he said to an expiring companion, belongs as justly to each one of our dying race, "Thou art in the same condemnation." Afflictions and bereavements, the removal of our friends, the calamities witnessed in the high places of our land, are proofs of our common sinfulness.

But though afflictions prove our *common* sinfulness, they afford in this world no test as to our *comparative* sinfulness. The man less afflicted here on earth is not therefore more holy than his neighbor who is more

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\* ROMANS v. 12.



afflicted. The towers of Siloam fell, while turrets in more guilty districts of Jerusalem stood immovable. The hapless Galilean mingled his blood with his sacrifices at the altar, while the more guilty Caiaphas was permitted to wear undisturbed his pontifical tiara, and the wretched Judas yet possessed, in comparative security, the dignity and privileges of the Apostleship. But the death of the poor peasants from the shores of Gennesareth, on the one hand, and the lengthened life of the high priest, and of the false apostle, on the other hand, were no proofs that the earliest victims were the chiefest sinners. Pilate, who had commanded the massacre, was doubtless, in the sight of God, although still surviving, a greater offender than those men whom he had butchered. When our Heavenly Father singles out a man, as the subject of an afflictive dispensation, it is no proof that he is peculiarly guilty above all his fellows.

Again, when God sends a sweeping visitation on a people, he often involves the righteous and the wicked in an indiscriminate death. It is not, indeed, always so; at times God sees fit to make distinctions even in this life in behalf of his servants that fear him. This it was for which Abraham pleaded when the storm was gathering over the devoted cities of the plain. "To slay the righteous with the wicked—that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" This it was in which the Psalmist trusted, and in which he exhorted others to trust. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." And thus it was that the three Hebrew children walked unharmed in the heart of that furnace, whose fiery mouth destroyed others that came near only to feed its flames. And thus it was that Daniel sat unharmed amid lions who brake of his adversaries every bone in their body ere they reached the bottom of the den. God may specially preserve his servants from afflictions that destroy others. He did it, perhaps, more under the Old Testament dispensation than under the New, because the earlier dispensation was especially one of temporal rewards and deliverances, and of prompt punishments. But under either economy, God often has seen fit to make the righteous and the sinner fall indiscriminately in some common calamity. It had been so, in the days of Solomon, and he observed it: "All things come alike to all. There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked—to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not."\* He observed it, we say, and not yet having reached the conclusion which he ultimately attained, and with which he shuts up his book,† the bringing of every work in eternity to a just judgment; not yet having found (for the book is a diary of doubts ending in certainty, and inquiries that grope after and at last clutch the truth),—not yet having gained the clue to the mystery, and the solution of his difficulties, a clue and solution which he afterwards found in the retributions of the last judgment, he for the time exclaimed, as he beheld the common fate of the good and the bad: "This is an evil

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\* Eccles. ix. 2.

† Eccles. xii. 13, 14.

among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all."\* In days long preceding those of this wise monarch, the same fact had been perceived and lamented. Job mournfully exclaimed, that in times of sudden and general calamity, the righteous perished with his ungodly neighbor. "If the scourge slay suddenly, he (it) will laugh at the trial of the innocent."† In other words, when the instrument of the divine vengeance is uplifted, be the rod what it may, it makes a wide and fell swoop, and it scorns to linger that it may draw distinctions between the innocent and the guilty. The distinction is left to the eternal world. It is drawn sufficiently at the bar of Final Judgment. "Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked."‡ For piety in the best is no safeguard from death, or from a sudden, a violent, a painful, or a shameful end.

Often, in fact, the guilt of a sinful community may fall most heavily on the heads of its most innocent members. When the righteous Josiah fell in battle with the king of Egypt, the sins of the guilty Jews lighted on the head of their pious monarch. And so when Naboth perished in the days of Ahab, and Zachariah was stoned between the porch and the altar, and James the Apostle was beheaded by Herod to please the people of the Jews, each of the victims was taken away, in fact, not so much because of his own sins, as because of the sins of others who survived him. "The righteous is taken from the evil to come." The nation is left with an intercessor less to avert the coming vengeance; and often with one enormity more to swell their coming account. One more twig is withdrawn from the lessening dyke that as yet shuts out the rising flood of wrath and ruin from a guilty land.

A similarity of fate is then no proof of an equal sinfulness. Go with me to the camp of Israel as they are entering the Promised Land. A curse from God has retarded the advance of their armies. They have selected one individual as the cause of their disasters. And they are stoning him in the valley of Achor. Let us go down some centuries later in the stream of their history. Accompany me again, and without the walls of Jerusalem I show you a similar victim enduring the like fate. But the resemblance in their fate proves no similarity in their character; for the one of these hapless sufferers is Achan, the troubler of Israel, and the other is the righteous Stephen, who dies with his face shining like that of an angel, blessed with parting breath his ferocious murderers, and lifts heavenwards eyes that have been already purged from earthly films, to discern the Son of Man standing in glory and power at the right hand of the Father, a Saviour waiting to welcome and to crown the protomartyr of his Church. The same disaster that sweeps one soul away to the horrors of eternal despair, may waft another to the endless harpings of heaven: and angels and demons may hover over the same field of death, commissioned the one to bear their exulting charge to the Father's home, the other to drag

\* Eccles. ix. 3.

† Job ix. 23.

‡ Malachi iii. 18.

their despairing prey to the abodes of wailing, to be plunged into the pit of unquenchable fire.

While death, then, proves us all sinful, the mode of our death affords no standard of our relative sinfulness. The murderer may, like the elder Herod, die on his pillow, while the martyr of Christ expires on the rack. And the same judgment which admits one of its victims to the rest of Paradise, may consign another, who perished at his side, to the flames of hell.

If any of my hearers are slow to allow their own sinfulness, slow to feel the justice of the Saviour's warning as to their own case, and that, except they repent, they shall likewise perish, we would urge upon their consideration but one more fact as bearing on the question of their sinfulness. Your dread of death, that instinctive horror of the grave which all feel, what is it but an implied confession of unworthiness and want of moral fitness for the change dissolution brings? Man's fear of death is itself, we say, proof of sin. For believing, as well nigh all of us do, that death will bring us nearer to God, and place us more immediately than before in his presence, we must also acknowledge that he to whom death thus approximates us is the holiest, and best, and happiest of beings. To enjoy the nearer society of such a being, must then be increased felicity to all the good. If we were really holy, would not the anticipation of such admission to the presence of God be the highest solace to be found amid the cares and conflicts of life? Should we not long for the day of our introduction to the presence-chamber of the great King; and, in the language of the poet of Methodism, should we not "press to the issues of death?" Should we not habitually, with Paul, long to depart? But we do, in fact, dread death. And that we do thus shrink from it, involving, as that event does, a nearer approach to God, is in itself an impeachment of our moral character. To have a dislike of God's society is in itself a sinful state of feeling. It is a confession, on our part, of the want of holiness, and of the requisite sympathy with pure and heavenly beings. This dread of death may be regarded as an unconscious reminiscence of our old and original state of sinlessness, and its forfeited privileges. Then the presence of God, when he visited the garden of Eden, was the delight and glory of our unfallen parents. But soon as they sinned, his presence became formidable. It was that of the detector and the avenger: and they shrank from the blaze of eyes too pure to look upon iniquity. Let men talk as they may of their own moral blamelessness before God, and of the moral dignity of the race, the general dread of death is in itself the acknowledgment of a state of heart that could not exist in a sinless being. It is this sense of moral defect and demerit that arms the destroyer with his terrors, and that points and envenoms the dart with which he threatens us. The *sting* of death is sin.

II. From the truth of our common sinfulness we pass to one of its consequences, our common liability to a death that may be unexpected



and violent. We are all liable to sudden death. "Except ye repent, ye shall all *likewise* perish." And this is the second division of our remarks.

That each of us is exposed to sudden death is a truth none will dispute, yet, like other undeniable truths, it is not sufficiently remembered. As death is the original penalty of sin, and the first existence of sin in us incurred that dread punishment, God has at any time, and however suddenly, a right to exact from us the penalty. And there is wisdom and mercy in his making the execution sudden. It is the more startling to others, our fellow offenders. The possibility of it, and our apprehension of it, may restrain us from many a sin into which we might else have rushed, had we been assured of any long term of impunity, or any protracted interval between our transgression and our removal. It is kind, we say, in our heavenly Father, by these sudden deaths, to set up mementoes, as it were, of man's mortality, in all our scenes of business and amusement; that we may thus in no spot feel ourselves entitled to forget him; and that he may thus hedge up the way of the transgressor with salutary terrors, by letting in upon every point the dread light of eternity, and making each eminence along the pathway command the prospect of an opening grave.

And in the accomplishment of that sentence of death which man's sin has provoked, how various are the means employed. Naught is so trivial but that God can make it the executioner of his vengeance, be it the worm that smote the pride of Herod, or the smooth pebble of the brook that cleft the brow of Goliath. Naught is so vast and unwieldy but that it readily lends itself to accomplish suddenly man's removal into eternity. The air, with all the winds and storms that store its arsenals, the waters, and the solid earth, are ready to do his bidding, and avenge his quarrel with his creature, man. The first deluge of water, and the last deluge of fire, either serves, at his pleasure, to purge his earth of sinners. But, besides these more stately and solemn messengers, how many less noticeable emissaries has he at his command. The starting of a horse, the obstructed valve of an engine, a falling plank in the vessel's side, a sunken rock no navigator has discovered and designated on no chart, a misplaced step, a falling tile—all may be his effectual messengers. And so in any scene, the ball-room, the theatre, the warehouse, or the highway, as well as in the home, we may be summoned. Death has all seasons and all scenes for his own. Invited to a festive excursion, we may, for aught that we know, be but decking ourselves as smiling and garlanded victims for the place of sacrifice. Such was the coming of the last messenger to those whose death has cast a gloom over the face of our land.

Now, if death be ever terrible, he is especially so when his coming is sudden. When, instead of making sickness and slow decay his forerunners, he dispenses with these harbingers and appears unannounced, his coming makes many a stout heart quail. The thread we had looked to see slowly attenuated and long drawn out, is snapped, as with a stroke, rudely and for ever. Life, with its cares, and hopes, and vani-

ties, and eternity, with its tremendous retributions, are brought into startling proximity, and seem the more strongly contrasted. But chiefly is sudden death terrible, because many, even of those habitually ready for another world, feel as if they would wish some interval between the secular business of this life and its close, some span, not only to set their house in order, but to scrutinize their own hopes for eternity, and fit the soul for its dread change as it hovers on the verge of another world. But to the sinner how awful is it to be cut off from his cherished hope that he may be allowed, before quitting earth, a brief preparation ! This great work, which should be his first care, he, from a desire of enjoying the world, makes his last ; and defers to the hurry, delirium, and feebleness of a death-bed the great business of a life-time. To cut him off suddenly is, then, to deprive him of his favorite resort, and to flood, in stern vengeance, that refuge of lies in which he had proposed to take a final shelter from the wrath of God, when he might no longer enjoy his idols. He had purposed to give to the ways of sin the strength of his faculties, and to pour on God's altars the last poor dregs of the wine-cup of life : to make youth, and health, and zeal, and influence, and energy a burnt-offering to Satan, and then to carry the poor offals of the sacrifice, age, feebleness, and sickness, to Christ. An unexpected death shuts him out from this refuge, where he has risked and lost his all.

But there are those to whom death, and even sudden death, is not terrible. Some, like the British Christian, whose frequent prayer, answered as it was in the mode of his removal, is inscribed on his tomb, have longed for an instantaneous summons, and exclaimed, "Sudden death, sudden glory." To them the King of Terrors had lost his ghastliness, and seemed, in their eyes, but the angel Death, commissioned by the Father to release them from cares and sins, enfranchise them from all the assaults of temptation, and admit them, introduced by the hand of the Mediator, to all the glories and all the joys of the beatific vision.

It is not then the *circumstances* of our death, be it violent and disastrous, or otherwise,—be it sudden or lingering, that should be the chief question. It is rather the *character* of the dying man, the moral image he carries into the world of spirits. What are his relations to God ? Let me die the death of the *righteous*, be it violent or peaceful, be it slow decay or some sudden stroke, be it solitary or amid companions and friends, be it a rude and agonizing dislodgement of the soul from the body, or a gentle and noiseless lapse, as of one falling asleep in Christ.

III. For, and this is the third division of our remarks, death to the sinner is destruction, and consequently sudden death is, to such, but sudden damnation. This is implied in the Saviour's language : "Ye shall all likewise *perish*."

Now, this could not mean the future destruction of the Jewish people in the fall of Jerusalem, for many sinners among his hearers died

in their beds before the storm of God's wrath burst in all its fierceness upon that guilty and doomed city, and ere there were seen yet, even as specks in the distant horizon, the Roman eagles gathering eagerly to the prey. Nor could it be a violent death, by sword or falling tower, like that of the Galileans or the people of Siloam; for we cannot suppose, with any show of reason, that all the enemies of Christ among the Jews, who did not perish by the Roman war, died by some other painful end. Nor could it be any mere death of the body that he intended, for he speaks of it as something which repentance, and repentance alone, could enable them to avoid. Now, from the death of the body, repentance does not save the man. The penitent must enter the shroud and the coffin as well as his ungodly neighbor. But the evil from which repentance does save us, is eternal destruction; and this, therefore, our Saviour intends when he uses the word "*perishing*." It is the eternal ruin that awaits the dying sinner.

Death, although often used but in that narrow sense, includes more than the corruption and decay of the body. We are in arrears to a violated law. The dissolution of the body is but the first instalment of our debt. Death is often spoken of as the debt of nature. More justly it might be termed the debt of sin; for our nature, whilst sinless, as it came from the Maker's plastic hand, was not mortal. The destruction of the body, then, is but a partial satisfaction of the debt which sin owes to the justice of God. And if you observe the margin of our text, you will perceive that a literal rendering of the word is: "*Were they debtors more than others?*" The diseases and pains, the decay and dissolution of the body, are but the earlier instalments of the vast penalty. Behind it comes the loss of the soul when in the resurrection the body has been revived and re-united to the soul, its old associate in sin, and both are cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, and with it eventually sinners "*perish*" by a ruin, endless, remediless, and hopeless.

The death of the body is but a transient act, the portal through which we pass into the far eternity beyond. It puts, indeed, an indelible imprint on a man's character. It leaves the filthy eternally filthy, and the holy unalterably holy; stripping the one of all hope, as it exempts the other from all fear, of a change. It snaps for ever the bond that binds the believer, while on earth, to care, and temptation, and conflict; and it also sunders the ties of opportunity, mercy, and hope, that surrounded and held up the unbeliever, while in this world of probation. Death is not, as the journalist, too often, in the case of the suicide, terms it, "*a termination of existence*." This is phraseology said to have come in upon us, with the Atheism of the French Revolution.\* Man, at death, it may rather be said, but begins to exist, in the highest sense of that word. His being is developed, and he has higher powers, and wider knowledge, and keener feelings, when made a disembodied spirit. And when skepticism would write, as did Revolu-

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\* President Dwight.

tionary France, over the gateway of the cemetery, the inscription: "Death is an eternal sleep," the saddened eye of faith reads, in its stead, the more true but melancholy sentence over the graves of those who have lived and died without hope and without God in the world: "And I looked and beheld a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him."\* On the dissolution of the body, follows, in the case of the ungodly, Hell with all its trooping terrors, though its fulness of anguish and its last torments may be reserved for the day of judgment.

How awful is the exchange which the sinner makes at death! "In that very day his thoughts perish;" his vain expectations of worldly enjoyments, of impunity in sin, and of a final season and space for repentance; his earthly plans; and all his rivalries, hopes and fears, which regarded exclusively the life that then suddenly closed its gates on him and closed them for ever. For his pleasures he has endless pain. During life, nothing could utterly extinguish hope within him; now, during eternity, nothing can rekindle it. From a world of religious privileges, and sacred times, and gracious invitations, he goes to a world that has no Sabbaths, no mercy-seat, no Advocate, no influences of the Spirit, not a promise, not a hope. On making the sad exchange, how must his forfeited and vanishing blessings brighten in his view, as they take their everlasting flight. How strangely contrasted, though drawn by the same hand, would be the two pictures of this world drawn by the sinner's spirit, when as yet without, and again when passed within, the veil that hides the eternal world. While yet in the body, and on this side the intervening barrier between the world of sense and show, and the world of reality, sense and self were all; time was as eternity, and eternity was brief and valueless as time. But now, entered on the further world, and when both are known by experience, eternity appears in its true infinitude, and time shrinks and dwindles into its proper littleness. Now Heaven and Hell are no longer dreams, and Christ is recognized as really a Saviour, King, and God; but a God now alienated, a King defied and incensed, whose power pervades all space and permits no escape, and a Saviour whose favor is forfeited irrecoverably and for ever.

Well were it for us if we kept these consequences of death more steadily before us. For this purpose, our Heavenly Father makes the lessons of our mortality so frequent, impressive, and various. The dead are quietly glancing upon the student from the shelves of his library. History is but, in a great measure, spoils won from the grave, or a compilation of the epitaphs of those who have gone before us. Nor is it literature only that is thus redolent of the tomb. Each scene of retired and domestic life has its avenues of memory and regret that lead back to the grave. Every household has its seat by the table and the hearth, now vacant, where once was seen a face now hidden and buried out of sight, and where once was heard a voice now stilled in the

silence of the sepulchre. Who may build himself a mansion, however stored with all that can adorn or gladden life, and say, over this threshold the coffin shall not pass? The funeral hearse rolls on its way past the doors of the ball-room and the theatre. In the pulpit and at the bar, in the Senate chamber or on the main-deck, we see the place of the departed, or the scene, it may even be, of their departure. Thus "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse;"\* and death is made to unroll its solemn commission, and publish its stern testimony in our thronged thoroughfares. Thus, in our own city, the most populous of our graveyards, with vegetation all rank, and a soil fattened by the accumulated corpses of a century, draws its sad length beside our most crowded street, as if it would throw out a dyke to stem the torrent of frivolity and fashion, each day rushing by; and the field of death looks down from its silent eminence, upon the long line of banking-houses, and the street of our busiest trafficking, as if a skeleton hand were beckoning from the spirit land to our merchant princes, and bidding them with all their gettings to get wisdom, and to consider their latter end that they may be really wise.

For death to the unprepared is the shipwreck of all hopes and the destruction of all happiness. But how shall we be prepared?

IV. And thus we reach our fourth and closing division. Repentance is our only safeguard. "*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*"

To prepare for death, the world knows no fitter method than to forget what cannot be evaded, and to drown all serious reflection in the din of business and amid the tumult of revelry. It is like bandaging the eyes to screen us from an exploding battery. The less we reflect, the greater, in fact, our danger of rushing blind-folded into ruin. It is such preparation as Joab gave Amasa when he grasped his beard as in friendly greeting, and asked of his health, whilst seeking the fatal spot where a single stroke would be sure and speedy death—a preparation it is that disarms, indeed, of anxiety and suspicion, and relieves us of intrusive fears, but that, at the same time, robs us of life and seals us to ruin. Not such the method of Scripture. It may alarm, but it alarms to save. It bids you prepare for death by retreating for protection from the impending destruction to that impregnable refuge, the Saviour's cross. There the penitent finds balm for his wounds, pardon for his sins, and life, eternal life, for his death.

For "the sting of death is sin." To remove sin is, therefore, the only mode of depriving the grave of its victory, and rendering the King of Terrors not only harmless but beneficent. How shall sin be removed but by renouncing it; and how can we renounce it but in Christ's strength; or how can our repentance be accepted but through his intercession, or our sins be forgiven but through his righteousness,

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\* Prov. i. 20.



or our bodies, once consigned to the grave, be released from its prison, but as his resurrection becomes the pledge of ours? A true repentance grasps the cross.

Death, then, preaches repentance. What John the Baptist cried in the wilderness, and Jesus of Nazareth in the streets of Jerusalem, this recent visitation of Divine Providence is proclaiming throughout our land, as from its high places of dignity and influence: "Repent ye. The axe is laid at the root of the trees. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Let the community repent, like Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah, and she may escape sore and impending judgments. What woes were those that overtook the Jewish people because they refused the command and repented not? Let a nation be exalted and enriched, as is our own, with physical and moral advantages, with all religious and civil privileges, an impenitent and godless spirit is yet sufficient to squander them all, and leave corruption, disunion, decay and subjection, as her final heritage. Let her, on the other hand, however afflicted and debased, but repent; and God can restore her from the deepest degradation, exalt and bless and establish her, till she that was servant of servants comes to sit as a queen among the nations.

Let the individual sinner repent. It is, by the will and the oath of God, his only hope of escaping the second death and evading the horrible pit of hell, on whose verge his unhappy step already wanders. It assures him of his ultimate deliverance, not only from the fear of death, but from all fears and all care, temptation and sin; and it houses the fugitive, at last, in the bosom of God. Does he ask: How am I to repent? We answer: Not of some sins only, but of all sins. Renounce your idols. Turn to Christ for pardon. Resolve in his strength. Plead his merits and trust his cross. In his name ask for light, and follow it when given. And not only clasp but wear the cross, making it your badge before the world, as well as your plea before God; and this done, the earth sinks subjected beneath your feet, hell withdraws, baffled of its aim and spoiled of its prey, and Heaven comes nearer, the nearer you draw to the inevitable tomb.

Are you a penitent? Then, however young and feeble and obscure you may be, you are contributing to avert, as the impenitent is contributing to attract, the clouds and the resounding tempests of God's wrath. Are you careless? Careless amid death and bereavement and danger? Careless amid Sabbaths and Bibles and the Saviour's invitations, and the Spirit's stirrings? Recollect that it is no vain word, no braggart threat, but the stern law of the skies. "He, that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

Let the world tell you what it will of natural innocence, and a morality of your own with which God cannot be angry, remember the world is not the law-giver or the judge in this matter. It must itself bide the law and face the Judge. That law is: Turn or perish; Repent and live. It is the fiat of your Creator, Saviour and Judge.

Repent, then, we entreat you, and be saved ; for it is mercy that calls, an infinite and divine forbearance that yet waits, and Heaven itself stoops to allure, to welcome and to shelter you.

Thus have we reviewed the lessons of eternal truth our Saviour has annexed to such dispensations of his Providence, as that which we are now remembering. We have seen how each such calamity proclaims man's sinfulness, reminds us of our common and continual exposure to an end as sudden, bids us remember the destruction that waits on the death of the impenitent, and commands us to exercise that repentance which alone saves from Hell and fits for death. Each such dispensation reveals to us, as by a sudden flash, the benighted sea of life which we are traversing, and the dim shores of the eternity we are nearing. It comes from God as on a mission to man, and while it recalls to him his sin and his danger, it also announces his one hope and salvation, and bids the penitent see in the cross and tomb of his Redeemer the gates of Paradise opened anew on Calvary, to a doomed and dying race ; while, to the impenitent, it tells of a death of despair, and shows, below the yawning tomb, a lower depth and the lurid fires of its torments. It compresses our business in one world, and our prospects for the next, into three brief words : REPENT OR PERISH.

In conclusion, we would remark :

1. First, on the *sins of the nation* ; for each such visitation calls us to remember these. Have we not, in many things, declined from the ways of our forefathers ? Could any candid and intelligent observer claim, for the mass of the statesmen of this country in our times, the high character for integrity and moral principle accorded to the fathers of the Revolution ? Virtue and talent there are ; but is the average of right principle in our great political parties equal to that displayed in the times of our forefathers ? In the growing rapacity and corruption of public servants ; in the violence of party discord and its venality ; and in the madness of passion seen disgracing even the halls of national legislation by brawls ; are there auguries for good, as to the destinies of the nation thus guided, and of the rising generation, thus to be trained and moulded ? The desecration of the Sabbath ; our national eagerness for gain—our growing luxury—the character of our widely spread and cheaper literature, much of the best of it frivolous, and much of it worse than frivolous, “sensual and devilish,”—are not all these causes for humiliation and alarm, and do they not afford, on such an occasion as this, materials for heart-searching inquiry and profound and penitent meditation ? We have, as a people, many and rich mercies, but they are reviewed with safety when regarded as heightening our responsibility, and, if neglected and perverted, as enhancing the more the darkness of our guilt, and the severity of our punishment. We are a young nation, and to the community as to the individual, youth is the season of ardor, hope, and boastfulness. If there has been justice in the charge other nations have made against us, that we are given to vaunting, has not God, in the disaster with

which he has now visited us, occurring as it did in the Navy, the pride of the nation, and not long after another of our vessels of war had perished in a night at the mouth of the Mediterranean, taught us how powerless for our defence, and how powerful for our ruin, he may make our very armaments and ships of war?

"They trust in navies, and their navies fail,  
God's curse can cast away ten thousand sail."

In the anxiety which some display to entangle our country in war, is there not shown a recklessness greatly to be deprecated? We believe government endowed, by the law of God, with power to take away human life—the life of the individual in the case of crime, and the lives of multitudes in the case of a just war. But seeing the butchery, profligacy and wretchedness which war, even when most just, must bring in its train, neither humanity nor piety allows us, for any petty cause, to employ this melancholy and last resort. We may not lightly spread through our borders such scenes as God has lately made us to behold on the deck of the Princeton. To rebuke the spirit of war may have been one merciful design of the recent calamity. It may be easy to unleash the hounds of war, and give them course over some distant territory, by issuing, amid the quiet scenes of legislation and diplomacy, the act that exposes leagues of defenceless coast to the marauder, or consigns some obscure and remote home, upon our frontiers, to pillage and slaughter, and all the tender mercies of the savage, the scalping-knife, and the firebrand. It is not as easily borne to see the ruin entering our own habitations, and the slaughter spread around and upon us. And now that God has permitted, in his wisdom, one of these gory and hideous spectacles, that are but the ordinary accompaniments of battle, to be presented, in a time of profound peace, and almost beneath the shadow of our Capitol, let us pray that the lesson may not be lost on the law-makers gathered in those halls, but that by its severe, yet salutary schooling, it may "teach our senators wisdom."\* We believe war, in a just cause, not indefensible: but it may not be lightly undertaken. It is in no careless mood, and for no trivial reasons, that the rulers of this people may bring such scenes as those recently witnessed into the houses and the peaceful commercial marine of our country;—make multitudes of their countrywomen as suddenly widows; and doom, by hundreds, unconscious and prattling infants, thus summarily to orphanage, and to all the multiform sorrows and perils that beset the path of the fatherless.

2. Next, let us not forget that we have, as a nation, received from the Most High *loud and memorable warnings*. In commercial reverses, has not God checked our reckless love of gain? In the death, shortly after his installation, of a former Chief Magistrate, the first instance in the history of our country of one dying while administering that high office, and in the subsequent removal of members both from the execu-

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\* Ps. cv. 22.

tive and from the legislative departments of our national government, and now again in this startling calamity, is not God reading to us, as a people, lessons of humility, dependence, and penitence? In the history of our present Chief Magistrate, distinguished as he has been by the frequent and near approach of mortality to his person, whilst he himself has been spared, how has God spoken to him, and to the whole land, of the uncertainty of life, and that a higher power than man's controls the affairs of the world! Having seen, as he has done, death vacating the Presidential chair for his occupancy, and soon after vacating again, by the death of the statesman who took it, the chair of the Vice Presidency he had quitted;—his predecessor in the first office of state falling on his right hand, his successor in the second station of dignity in the land falling on his left hand;—bereaved, as he has been, by the incursions of death into the circle of his friends; bereaved in his home of a consort, who, from sharing his exaltation, passed soon to the tomb; and bereaved in his cabinet, first, of Legare, rich in promise, talents, and acquirements, and smitten down in the fullness of his strength; and now of Upshur and Gilmer, his personal as well as political friends, men of principle and talent, and possessed of the confidence of the people;—is there not much to awaken in his behalf the sympathies and prayers of the churches? Commanded as we are in Scripture, to pray for them that are in authority, should not the wish of each Christian patriot be, that a course so singularly marked may, by the grace of God, be sanctified to teach him who has run it, the uncertainty of all earthly honors, held as they are by the tenure of a life so soon spent, and often so suddenly terminated; and should not our prayer be that he who has been, like Paul, "*in deaths oft*," may also, with the Apostle, be able to say, as he reviews the course and purpose of his life, "*to me, to live is Christ*," and with Paul to add, as he looks fearlessly toward its close, "*and to die is gain*?" For difficult as is ever and in all conditions the Christian's path, and glorious as is his triumph over the world in any lot, the difficulty and the glory are each enhanced in the case of exalted station. To serve God and his generation faithfully, not in the less embarrassed walks of private life, but in a position of eminence, amid the strife of tongues, the collisions and wranglings of parties, and the thronging snares, the incessant and wasting cares, and the heavy responsibilities of public life, needs no ordinary measure of divine grace. And happy, as rare, is the worldly greatness that does not, in consequence, peril the soul of its possessor. And whether tempted unduly to envy or rashly to blame those in eminent stations, are we not as a people warned, by so many deaths in the high places of our land, when not, as is most generally the case, single victims, but whole clusters and groups are reaped for the grave,—are we not warned less eagerly to covet distinctions death so soon levels, and more habitually to trust, and more faithfully to serve, that God who only is great, for he is the unchangeable and the Almighty one "who only hath immortality?"

3. Again, do not incidents of this kind loudly call upon *the Christians*

*of the land to know their rights and duties?* Are they not warned, that they never, amid the fierce conflicts of party, and the din and routine of business, forget their one profession, and the high principles it involves? Ever is the Judge at hand. His coming is near; and that servant labors most wisely and most safely who does it continually, as under his Great Taskmaster's eye. In the contentions of the day, political or religious, is it not well that the image of death should often interpose itself, casting its chill and calming shadow over the feverish strifes of the hour, lest we cherish against those who oppose us such feelings as we should not wish to recall over their graves, or to be surprised by the summons of death while indulging? It seems but too evident that the churches of our day can retain their hold upon some great and vital truths only at the price of earnest controversy. Yet inevitable as it may be, and in its results most beneficial, it must also be admitted, that most adverse to piety and happiness are the feelings it too often engenders. How harshly do the censures that political antagonists or religious controversialists may utter against their opponents, sound on the ear, when once the subject of them is suddenly entombed; and how pitiable, as we now look back upon them, the exasperated personal bickerings of writers, housed in a common sepulchre. It was an affecting regret of an eminent scholar—it is Erasmus of whom we speak—in the days of the Revival of Letters, that one of his opponents had been snatched away by death, before they could exchange forgiveness for their mutual offences against the law of charity. And if to the political contests, ever eager and rife amongst us, must in this age be added the social agitation, produced by churches “contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,” it will be, as in the near prospect of the grave, and as in constant preparation for a sudden departure, that Christians will best be harnessed, manfully yet meekly, to defend the truth a Savior bequeathed to their charge, the legacy of a Master who overcame by suffering, and who built, as it were, out of the cross upon which he had hung, the steps of that throne where he sits a crowned conqueror. Above all, let Christians remember their duties to their country in the *closet*. That hand, out of which the prophet saw streaming beams of glory, where are the hidings of Divine Power, is opened, in blessings, to the believer kneeling in his retirement. And when the churches invoke it, that hand arms itself, as with gauntlet and glaive, for the defence of the land, or, as the Psalmist prayed, “takes hold of shield and buckler, draws out also the spear, and stops the way”\* of the adversaries. Thus works the Almighty where men are found who make his right arm their reliance, and who, like Daniel, greatly beloved of Heaven, are, like him, constant in supplication before the throne, for themselves, and for their people, and for the Israel of God.

4. Death, in all its aspects, is formidable to man the sinner, except as it is viewed in its relation to the *death of Christ*. And if, from all the

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\* Ps. lxxv. 2, 3.



scenes of worldly pomp and rejoicing, from earth's high places of coveted dignity and influence, and from its lowliest nooks of retirement, a path is ever found leading to the grave; so, to the eye of the believer, from every scene in life, and from every theme in morals or religion, there is opened a broad and direct avenue to the grave of his Saviour. The cross of Christ is the world's hope. He who became the

"Death of death, and hell's destruction,"

was revealed, to destroy the works of the devil, "and that through death he might destroy *him that had the power of death*."\* To know him is life; to reject him is the seal of the second death, and the earnest of eternal ruin. Well, then, may Christ's sacrifice receive the prominence given it in Scripture and in the scenes of the eternal world. His death was the theme, as Moses the receiver, and Elias the reviver, of the law, talked with our Lord, on the mount, and "spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."† It is the glorying of the ransomed before the throne of light. When heaven visits earth, as on the mountain of transfiguration, and when earth visits heaven, as in the ascension of the emancipated and glorified spirit to the general assembly and church of the first-born, this one event is the bond of their common fellowship, and the death upon Calvary is the basis of their common happiness. Exulting in this, the saint looks forward to the last trial as but brief, and its issue as sure and peaceful. The sinner, rejecting the benefits of this sacrifice, does it amid a world which, in spite of his irreligion, is none the less a world of bereavement and death; and on the verge of another world, in which, because of his irreligion, death can never be unstung, whose ruin has no redemption, and on whose dark and heaving sea of wo breaks no solitary beam of hope.

5. It is, lastly, the wisdom of man, born as he is the heir of mortality, to be *living in a state of constant preparation* for his great change. It was said by that sweet singer of our modern Israel, Dr. Watts, in the latter years of his life, that each night he composed himself to slumber, little anxious whether he awoke in time or in eternity. Of that ornament of the English bench, the Christian magistrate, Sir Matthew Hale, it is said that he was once administering justice, when a strange darkness overspreading the country, joined with some idle predictions that had become current, filled men's minds with alarm, as if the end of the world had come. The devout judge proceeded calmly in the discharge of his office, wishing, if the world ended, to be found in the assiduous fulfilment of his duties. A habitual preparation for sudden death would be itself a sufficient preparation, and the best, for that judgment which some of our erring brethren announce as near.

Are there any scenes or employments in which we should not wish to be surprised by the messenger of death? It is scarce safe to be

\* Heb. ii. 14; 1 John iii. 8.

† Luke ix. 31.

employed in them for any time, however brief, for that brief hour may bring the close of our days, and seal up our history to the time of the end. Let us not indulge in those things, or busy ourselves in those employments, to be surprised in which would be our shame and our ruin at the hour of death, lest we be like "the wicked, driven away in his wickedness." And what can be more tremendous in prospect than this? Let poverty the most grinding afflict me—let me be racked by disease—let helplessness, exile, and shame wait around my death-bed; but let not sin, unrepented and unforgiven sin, be the companion and curse of my dying hours, for then I perish. The trembling Esther, as she went, in peril of her life, to urge her request, exclaimed, "If I perish, I perish," but perished not. The timorous disciples, as they saw the waters tempestuous, and the vessel ready to be filled, exclaimed to their Lord, "Master, we perish;" and he arose and spoke, and the waters were calmed, and the disciples saved. But if sin be my master, cherished, trusted, and idolized, no such peradventure as encouraged Esther remains for me. I perish without an alternative, inevitably, and for ever. No deliverance like that which rescued the Apostles will be wrought for me. For if sin be my master, it is a master that cannot save. And the God of heaven and earth will say to the impenitent sinner as said his servant Peter to the sorcerer Simon, "Thy money,"—thine idol, be it what it may—"perish with thee." Death is on the way, and hell following with it; and if sin rule in us, the ruler and the ruled, the master and the servant, the idol and the idolator, must sink together into endless perdition. Now by lessons, therefore, in the opening leaves of the volume of Providence, that enforce and repeat the admonitions of the volume of Scripture; and now by lessons in Scripture that illustrate and interpret, in their turn, the visitations of Providence; by the mutual and reflected light of inspiration and calamity, the one explaining the other; by "*the rod*," and the voice of Him "*who hath appointed it*," as He wields the one and utters the other,—God is instructing us to renounce our sins. He who rules, and who is soon to judge the world, is reiterating over our land his denunciations against sin, his warnings against ruin, and his demands of repentance. Repentance is alike his claim and our duty. Each calamity cries aloud, and this is its message. And from the depths of our own conscience, in our hours of solitude and serious reflection, the summons is re-echoed, "Repent ye." "Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

## SERMON CCCLXL

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### REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

"The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."—John v. 28, 29.

"THE Bible is our only source of satisfactory information respecting our condition in another world. Philosophy may throw out some dark hints and incite us to *hope* for immortality. But this is all that she can do. To revelation we are indebted for the only clear light which we possess on this subject.

A more important subject cannot arrest human attention. We find it hard to bear a few years of affliction, or a few hours of pain. With how much solicitude, then, must we inquire respecting our condition in that eternal world, when ages roll on in their unbroken and interminable series? We find a few years of happiness, or a few hours of enjoyment a priceless blessing. How deeply, then, must we feel interested in the possible enjoyments of eternity?

I. Let us, then, examine the instructions of the Bible respecting a future world. All are aware that the Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language, and the New Testament, for the most part, in the Greek. The Hebrews called the grave *sheol*. The Greeks called it *hades*. The English word *grave*, the Greek word *hades*, and the Hebrew word *sheol*, meaning one and the same thing. When the Hebrews spake of *sheol*, or the Greeks of *hades*, they meant only *the world of the dead—the place of departed spirits*, without any reference to their condition as happy or unhappy.

The New Testament writers call the grave the place of departed spirits—the world of the dead, *hades*. And by this term alone they neither expressed happiness nor misery. The good, when they die, go to *hades*; and the bad, when they die, go to *hades*. In other words, the good and the bad alike die, and go alike to the world of spirits.

Now the sacred writers also teach, that in *hades*, there is a place of rewards and a place of punishment. They teach that the good go to a part of *hades* where they are made happy, and that the bad go to a part of *hades* where they are made miserable; that in *hades*, that is, in the future world, "some awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

It was necessary to give some name to these two different parts of *hades*. What name should be given to that part which was the abode of wo? They would of course assign to it some name expressive of that which is loathsome and awful. They naturally looked about them to see what object in this world was most abhorrent to them, and as-

signed the same name to that part of *hades* which was devoted to suffering.

Near Jerusalem there was a deep valley into which all the rubbish and filth of the city was cast. The bodies of dead animals; decayed vegetables; the sweepings of the streets, and all the other filth which must unavoidably be collected in a populous city, were thrown to putrify together. Such a mass of corruption near the city would endanger its health by filling the air with deadly exhalations. In order to obviate this, continual fires were kept, that everything capable of being burnt might be consumed. Here the loathsome worm rioted unceasingly in the putrid carcasses of animals, which were daily cast in for his repast. Here the fire was continually burning by day and by night, and dark volumes of smoke were unceasingly rolling up from this awful receptacle of impurity. It was a place full of abominations; and to the Jew, with his peculiar notions of ceremonial uncleanness, it was beyond expression revolting. This valley was called "*Geenna*," the English of which is "Hinnom's vale."

Therefore, this name was affixed to that part of *hades* which was devoted to punishment, and it was called the *geenna* of *hades*. As the worst place which the Jew could conceive of, in this world, was called *geenna*, so he spake of the *geenna* of the future world, just as we now say, such a place is the Sodom of America, or such a man is a very Judas Iscariot.

Thus it is said, "be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him which, *after he hath killed*, hath power to cast into *hell*," i. e., into *geenna*; for *geenna* is the Greek word here used, and not *hades*. Again: "It is better for ye to enter into life maimed, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into hell (*geenna*), into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched."

The imagery here, is taken from the ceaseless fires and the putrefaction of Hinnom's vale. In all these and many other cases, it is the *geenna* of *hades* which is spoken of. All alike must go down to the mighty empire of the grave. But as the metropolis of Judea, in its pride and its glory, had its receptacle for impurity and all uncleanness; as it had its valley, where the ceaseless flame consumed, and the worm rioted, and the smoke of its fires ever ascended, so shall there be in the world of spirits—in the New Jerusalem, in a still more awful sense, a vale of Hinnom, into which shall be cast all that offend or do iniquity; where the destruction shall be everlasting from the presence of the Lord; where the rioting worm shall never die; where the consuming flame shall never be quenched, where the smoke of torment shall ascend for ever and for ever.

II. There is, in the future world, a place of rewards. It was necessary that some appropriate name should be given to that place—some name that would image to the mind elevation and bliss. What is

there upon which the human eye can fall, so majestic as the Heavens spread out above us? What is there more alluring to the imagination, than to rise from earth, and soar upon untiring wing through the skies? The future world has consequently its heaven of delight, where angels' wings glitter with plumage that the bird of Paradise never rivalled; where music, more melodious than was ever warbled from the sweetest songsters of the forest, is borne upon the fragrant breeze, from harps of gold, and from blest voices. The redeemed of Christ shall spread a wing that never tires in this bright Heaven. The victim of unrepented sin, cast into the Hinnom's vale of the future world, shall be devoured by the undying worm, shall be burned by the quenchless flame, and the smoke of his torment shall ascend not for a few days only, but for ever and ever.

Such is the Scriptural doctrine of the future world. It has its Hell and its Heaven. The one is the abode of the devil and his angels, the other is the capital of creation's monarch,—the abode of Holy angels, and of purified spirits.

III. This world is the world of probation. We are here maturing for hell's dark valley of fire and worms, and all impurity, or for Heaven's mansions and songs. At the judgment, which comes after death, the sentence is to be pronounced which consigns us to the one, or elevates us to the other. Heaven's glories shall never wane; the angel's wing shall never tire; the song of praise shall never cease. And he who goes down to hell's depths, will find that the worm never dies and the fire never shall be quenched. There will be different degrees of remorse in hell and different degrees of elevation in Heaven. But the fiend and the seraph are alike immortal. The image of God's eternity is stamped even upon the devil's soul.

Christian ministers are sometimes accused of trying to terrify sinners to repentance by exhibiting distorted and exaggerated representations of the pains of hell. But to give an exaggerated description of the weight of endless wo, is impossible. The powers of human language have been absolutely exhausted by the pen of inspiration in describing the horrors which await the wicked in the eternal world. Language cannot express more than the sacred writers have expressed. No imagination can conceive imagery more terrific. The hell of Homer and of Virgil is tame indeed compared with the retribution which the Bible reveals as awaiting the impenitent beyond the grave.

When the mind contemplates the lost spirit "scarred with the sword of justice, and wan with despair," dwelling in devouring flames, with the devil and his angels for his associates, and groaning beneath the burden of eternal chains, it feels, at once, that language can describe nothing more fearful—that the imagination cannot penetrate a region of thicker gloom.

Some of you may say that there is no pleasure in hearing such a sermon as this; it is replete with horror. The Christian minister is not commissioned to proclaim *pleasant sermons*; but to warn of judgment,



and to entreat sinners to flee from the coming wrath. If the exhibition of these truths is so painful to our feelings now ; if we cannot bear even to *hear God's message* respecting the doom of the finally impenitent, what will be our feelings when these terrors, in their material reality, flash upon our eyes, and we are enduring, in bodily presence, this just and awful doom ?

Here you have a true picture of your situation in the future world, unless through Christ you obtain redemption. And into these scenes you are liable any day or any hour to be plunged. Death stands ready at your door, and at the corner of every street ; and when you least expect it, his dart may pierce you. Is it then needless to entreat you to awake from sleep, and to prepare to meet your God ?

Christian, are you aware of the merited doom from which Christ has rescued you ? Oh ! what would now be your prospects were it not for a Saviour's love ? And are you indeed ransomed from hell ? Is the sentence of your condemnation reversed ? Can you look with composure upon the lowering storms of eternity, feeling that you are secure from their fury ? Happy, happy Christian ; the blood of atonement has marked you as redeemed ; the image of God is replaced upon your soul ; the love of every spirit now winging its heavenly flight is extended to you with fraternal warmth.

Have you a *living* faith ? Do you *believe* that you are an heir of Heaven ? Then, every day is a day of happiness. In *faith* you have a cure for every human ill. It dispels every cloud. It disarms every affliction."

"For earth hath no sorrow  
That heaven cannot heal."